

Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee

Jan 16, 2007 Meeting Summary

(DRAFT)

Attendees: Bill Frick, Debbie Brown, Delegate Bill Bronrott, Erwin Mack, Linda Katz, Lt. Ron Smith, Fred Lees. Staff: Matt Greene. Guests: John Wetmore (TV show Perils for Pedestrians); John Howley, MCCPTA President Dr. Jane de Winter; Diana Lugo; Edgar Gonzales, DPWT; Emil Wolanin, DPWT; Blanca Kling, MCPD; Chief Manger, MCPD; Glenn Orlin, Deputy Staff Director, County Council; Andrea Turner, DPWT.

Agenda items:

2. Education efforts. Discussion with MCCPTA President Dr. Jane de Winter.
3. Report on meetings with County leaders.
4. Budget forums
5. Road Code changes. What's changing, opportunities for PSAC testimony, consultant help in preparing testimony.
6. Next Dialogue / location changes for regular PSAC meetings.
7. Misc. informational items
8. New Business/Citizen Concerns

Bill Frick invited Police Chief Tom Manger to begin the meeting with a report on Police activities.

- Chief Manger reported that the 2006 Pedestrian Collision Overview report would be ready soon.
- New "LYNX" system coming soon that will tie together the records management systems for local jurisdictions in the COG area. We should wait another six months or so until the LYNX system is operational before adding an additional crash analyst. In response to a question from Erwin, he mentioned how this new system will aid coordination in the Crossroads area between Montgomery and Prince George's Counties and Takoma Park.
- He said that items 6 & 7 on the 2007 Pedestrian Safety Agenda are great recommendations – if they have more money they could increase these activities and it would be money well spent.
- He meets with three committees each month representing the Latino, African American, and Asian communities. Discussed last month with his Latino liaison the recent fatalities involving Latinos. They had a few recommendations and questions. He knows that the PSAC is doing some of this but wanted to share these and see how they fit with the 2007 agenda. The first recommendation was to have a faith based program when reaching out to the Latino community. All other issues affecting the Latino community, such as gang problems, domestic violence, and immigration issues are most effectively communicated through the faith-based community. His contacts felt that getting faith leaders to send a message about being good drivers and safe pedestrians was crucial. Other ideas: pass out free reflective materials in areas with high fatalities, make sure school and faith-based representatives participate in the PSAC, get restaurant owners to convey safety messages to their employees. Grace Rivera is the contact on his committee working on these issues.
- Blanca Kling works on reaching out to the Spanish-speaking community for the Police Public Information Office. She works with the Spanish language media and is available

to help get the message out for us and to do more to reach the Latino community generally.

Erwin offered some comments on the “sobering initiative” in the Langley Park area and how Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties are working together. He suggests that we encourage Prince George’s County to create a pedestrian safety committee that could work with the PSAC together in the Crossroads area. Chief Manger offered that the Hispanic Chamber, along with Police and Liquor Control, are working together on alcohol issues, which also affects pedestrian safety.

Diana Lugo came to the PSAC for the first time and said she was interested in reaching out personally to the Hispanic community and could do so through any community groups, but that she also has contacts in some local churches. She would like to get some help and training with understanding crash data, risk factors, and what educational messages resonate with drivers and walkers. Diana also offered that if she had more understanding, as well as was armed with brochures and other materials, that she would even take the pedestrian safety message to the street – talking with pedestrians or handing out flyers while riding the bus. Matt offered to help her in getting prepared to make presentations and lead discussions on pedestrian safety and mobility. Blanca mentioned a resource at the University of Maryland who developed some bilingual materials available for download from the internet.

Item 5: Road Code. Glenn Orlin, Deputy Staff Director for the County Council, distributed a summary document and gave a brief description of the purpose and history of the efforts to revise the County’s Road Code. The code changes would apply to new and reconstructed County-owned streets and would change road standards to achieve more pedestrian friendly street environments and reduce impervious surfaces and storm water runoff. He explained some of the issues and tradeoffs involved, such as narrowed roadways slow traffic speeds and increase pedestrian safety but may cause more sideswipe vehicle collisions. He provided the example of Connecticut Avenue near the District line having nine-foot wide travel lanes, where most roads in the County are twelve-feet wide. He explained that the bill would be debated and adopted soon, but that opportunities may be available for affecting changes to design standards that would take place after adoption of the bill. Glenn’s work in developing the proposed changes to the Road Code borrowed from, among others, standards suggested in a new document published by the Institute for Transportation Engineers and the Congress for New Urbanism, called Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities: An ITE Proposed Recommended Practice. It can be downloaded here: <http://ite.org/bookstore/index.asp>.

Edgar Gonzales, Deputy Director for Transportation Policy at DPWT, gave his views on the Road Code. He built a case against the dangers of legislating standards and requiring DPWT to seek either Council or Planning Board approval for deviations from standards. There are many tradeoffs and conflicts in each situation and professional engineers should have the discretion to develop balanced designs that consider the needs of the environment and of all road users.

Matt next explained the idea of hiring an independent outside expert to provide a review of the proposed Road Changes as they would affect pedestrian safety and mobility. He explained that he had already discussed this Dr. Reid Ewing, a civil engineer and planner and one of the foremost experts on the transportation / land use connection and traffic calming. It was decided to let Bill Frick talk more with after the meeting to decide about whether to go forward with hiring Dr. Ewing.

Item 3: Report on meetings with County leaders. Delegate Bronrott explained how the 2007 Pedestrian Safety Agenda had been developed in late 2006 and was distributed to all of the County's elected leaders, plus Dr. Weast, and two members of the school board, during one-on-one meetings with Bill Frick, Delegate Bronrott, Lisa Rother, and Matt Greene. He explained that most leaders were very receptive and that additional meetings were planned with Art Holmes as well as Public Information Officers from various departments. Some discussion followed about reaching school kids through MCPS. Dr. Weast is not in favor of imposing any curriculum on the schools, but was very positive generally about pedestrian safety. He essentially promised to help incorporate messages on pedestrian safety into existing lesson plans and subject matter discussions. He also indicated his willingness to conduct a major pedestrian safety project using video production and other resources at MCPS, much like the campaign done last year covering school bus safety.

Item 2: Education efforts. Erwin discussed the need to get permission from the MCPS superintendent in order to allow a poster creation project at Crossroads elementary schools. Dr. de Winter offered some advice as did Blanca. Delegate Bronrott suggested that art teachers might be the best ones to conduct this kind of activity. Dr. de Winter suggested contacting the teachers' union president about any proposals to introduce new curriculum. Even creating a poster would require some instructions for the teachers that would vary by grade level and materials for the teachers would need to be created.

Discussion turned to Safe Routes to Schools and how we could encourage walking or biking to school. Dr. de Winter noted that not all students may have a safe route and so we couldn't necessarily have a blanket policy of encouraging. International Walk to School Day was mentioned and Delegate Bronrott said that he thought that every elementary school in the County ought to participate. He noted that only between 10 – 20 had in recent years. Dr. de Winter offered that the MCCPTA could help distribute information. First Delegate Assembly in the fall is late Sept. – too late. Should distribute some information at the April or May meetings, but then representatives change. Could use email listserve and website. Could also do a mailing in August to every school simply addressed to "PTA President." Dr. de Winter said that the schools might be able to translate materials but that it would take a long time. The MCPS won't post anything on their website unless it's in English only or all six of the languages they post. If we send written materials out to the schools it would not have to be in all six languages. Could just do English and Spanish. Blanca offered that we could also ask faith-based institutions to distribute written materials, such as encouraging them to ask their schools to participate in Walk to School Day. For PTA distribution, it would be up to the individual PTAs to copy and distribute to parents. Can also get permission for direct distribution to all students through the superintendent's office. Delegate Bronrott also suggested that PSAC members could talk for ten minutes at one of the spring assemblies. April is sure, May not happen at all – need to squeeze in on the agenda and can distribute written materials in hard copy or electronically.

Dr. de Winter identified some issues for future cooperation with the PSAC: crossing guard coverage for after school activities, sidewalks and engineering issues at schools, drop off and pick up zones/bus traffic.

Item 4. Budget forums. It was noted that Pam Miller and Robin Jeweler spoke at the Budget forums (Robin missing this PSAC meeting in order to do so) and that many forums seem to have some positive comments from the community on the need for enhanced pedestrian safety and mobility.

Item 6. Next outreach meeting (Dialogue): It was agreed that another Dialogue in the upcounty should still be pursued.

Item 8: New Business/Citizen Concerns. John Wetmore suggested finding information at www.saferoutesinfo.org and made a pitch for his latest episode of Perils for Pedestrians.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:45.